Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of the Cook Islands*

1. The Committee considered the combined second and third periodic reports of the Cook Islands (CEDAW/C/COK/2-3) at its 1618th and 1619th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1618 and CEDAW/C/SR.1619), held on 13 July 2018. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/COK/2-3 and the responses of the Cook Islands are contained in CEDAW/C/COK/Q/2-3/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined second and third periodic reports. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group and welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue. It also appreciates the additional information provided in writing following the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its delegation, which was headed by the former Speaker of the House of Parliament of the Cook Islands, Tutonga Puapii Picknic Rattle, and included representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2007 of the State party's initial report (CEDAW/C/COK/1) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Family Protection and Support Act, in 2017, which provides for no-fault divorce, child support, parenting arrangements and the care and protection of children and is aimed at facilitating access to justice and protection from gender-based violence for women in the outer islands of the State party;

(b) Harassment Act, in 2017, which provides for protection against violence and abuse for people who are not in a domestic relationship;

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventieth session (2–20 July 2018).

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(c) Ministry of Health Act, in 2013, repealing and replacing the Ministry of Health Act, 1995–1996, and thereby removing the requirement that women obtain spousal or partner consent before they could undergo sterilization;

(d) Employment Relations Act, in 2012, under which discrimination on the grounds of maternity status is prohibited;

(e) Education Act, in 2012, which provides for continued education for young women and girls following pregnancy.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption of the following:

(a) Strategic policy of equity, access and participation of the Ministry of Education, in 2016, to promote access to education for women and girls;

(b) National policy on gender equality and women's empowerment and its strategic plan of action for the period 2011–2016;

(c) National sustainable development plan for the period 2011–2015, in which a gender perspective is incorporated into actions and targets as a priority issue;

(d) Code of Conduct of the Public Service Act, in 2009, prohibiting discrimination in the public sector on the basis of such grounds as gender, sexual preference and maternity and family status.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2009.

Sustainable Development Goals

7. The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of de jure and de facto substantive gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and of the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State party to recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development of the State party and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect.

C. Parliament

8. The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites Parliament, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report.

D. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Definition of discrimination and legislative framework

9. The Committee notes the continuing review, since 2008, of legislation in the State party to ensure its consistency with the Convention. It remains concerned, however, that the prohibition of discrimination provided in article 64 of the

Constitution of the Cook Islands does not comprise a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention.

10. **The Committee draws the attention of the State party to target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, and recommends that the State party, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention, adopt, without delay, a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, covering all prohibited grounds of discrimination and encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres.**

Legal status of the Convention and harmonization of laws

11. The Committee is also concerned that, notwithstanding the ongoing work of the law reform programme to bring legislation into line with the Convention, there is no timetable for the completion of such reform and that the provisions of the Convention have not been fully incorporated into the national law of the State party.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Fully incorporate the provisions of the Convention into national law;**

(b) **Adopt and adhere to a clear timetable for the completion of the legislative reform necessary to ensure that national law is in full compliance with the Convention.**

Access to justice

13. The Committee commends the State party on its efforts to increase access for women and girls to justice, including through the use of protection orders under the Family Protection and Support Act of 2017. Nevertheless, it remains concerned that only victims of domestic violence are eligible for such protection under the legal aid programme, which is not extended to women who are victims of discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.

14. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party extend the provision of legal aid to women who are victims of discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.**

National human rights institution

15. The Committee notes that the State party has not yet established an independent national human rights institution with a broad mandate to promote and protect women's rights, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

16. **The Committee recommends that the State party establish a national human rights institution with a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, including women's rights, and gender equality, that is independent in accordance with the Paris Principles.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

17. The Committee commends the State party on the policy measures taken to advance gender equality, such as the adoption of the national policy on gender equality and women's empowerment and its related five-year strategic plan of action for the period 2011–2016, the gender stock-taking conducted by the Government in

2009–2010 and the gender profile conducted in 2012. Nevertheless, the Committee notes the following with concern:

(a) That the Social Policy and Services Division, which implements the national policy on gender equality and women's empowerment through the implementation of social policies and the provision of services, lacks adequate human, technical and financial resources and faces high staff turnover, hampering the implementation of the policy;

(b) The absence of information on measures taken to review the strategic plan of action, which concluded in 2016, and adopt a new national plan;

(c) The lack of effective coordination between the government agencies that set social policy and provide services and other agencies, which impedes the integration of a gender perspective into policies and programmes across all sectors and levels of government;

(d) The limited efforts of the State party to raise awareness of gender equality, as well as the reliance of the State party on short-term programmes, which are often implemented by civil society organizations without sufficient resources;

(e) The lack of outreach programmes for women in the outer islands.

18. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to the setting of social policy and the provision of services in order to implement the national policy on gender equality and women's empowerment effectively and retain staff, including through the use of incentives;**

(b) **Review the strategic plan of action for the period 2011–2016 of the national policy and adopt a new plan of action with adequate funding and technical expertise allocated in order to reinforce substantive equality between women and men in all six priority areas, namely, gender-responsive policies, equal participation in decision-making, economic empowerment, climate change, health and violence against women, and monitor its implementation;**

(c) **Establish a ministry of women's affairs to monitor the implementation of the gender mainstreaming policy in all ministries and government departments and ensure that it has a clear mandate to effectively coordinate policies and programmes on women's rights;**

(d) **Collaborate with, support and partner with civil society organizations in the implementation of programmes on women's rights;**

(e) **Establish outreach programmes for women in the outer islands.**

Temporary special measures

19. The Committee notes that the State party has adopted certain temporary measures as a strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men. It remains concerned, however about the limited understanding of temporary special measures and how they are used to achieve substantive equality between women and men in the State party in all areas covered by the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in political and public life, education, employment and health care.

20. **In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality between women and men in all areas in the State party, in particular in political life, as well as in the fields of education, employment and health care;**

(b) **Raise awareness among relevant government officials, policymakers, political parties and parliamentarians of the non-discriminatory nature of temporary special measures and of their importance to the achievement of substantive equality between women and men in all areas in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged.**

Stereotypes and harmful practices

21. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes in the State party, through which women are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination and their social status is undermined, and which may constitute the root causes of gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence. It is also concerned about the lack of specific strategies aimed at modifying or eliminating such stereotypes. The Committee is also concerned about the absence of a gender-specific code of ethics for media professionals in the light of reports of negative gender stereotyping in the media.

22. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt specific strategies, including awareness-raising programmes, targeted at government officials and the general public, on the negative impact of discriminatory stereotypes on the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society on the enjoyment by women of their human rights;**

(b) **Develop and promote the engagement of men in programmes aimed at combating all forms of gender-based violence against women, changing patriarchal attitudes and mindsets and promoting shared responsibility;**

(c) **Encourage the Media Council to adopt a gender-specific code of ethics that promotes positive images of women and girls, and review the use of content and language and portrayal of women by the media for ways in which they may perpetuate discriminatory gender stereotypes.**

Gender-based violence against women

23. The Committee welcomes the State party's legislative and policy measures to combat gender-based violence, such as the enactment of the Family Protection and Support Act, in 2017, which expands the scope of protection of victims of domestic violence and provides for protection orders and police safety orders. The Committee notes with concern, however, that the Act fails to comprehensively address all forms of gender-based violence against women. It also remains concerned about the following:

(a) The lack of a comprehensive strategy to address all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace;

(b) The prevalence of gender-based violence, in particular domestic and sexual violence, which remains underreported owing to lack of trust in the police and the criminal justice system on the part of victims;

(c) The lack of shelters for women who are victims of gender-based violence;

(d) The use of alternative dispute resolution and mediation procedures in cases of domestic violence, given that such procedures often do not ensure equal protection of the rights of women and girls.

24. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive strategy to combat all forms of gender-based violence against women, implement the Family Protection and Support Act of 2017 and amend the Crimes Act 1969 to ensure that perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence are prosecuted and adequately punished;**

(b) **Adopt a comprehensive law to address gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and provide specialized training to judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and other law enforcement officials, health personnel and non-State actors, including traditional chiefs, in gender-sensitive protocols, based on the principle of confidentiality, for working with women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence;**

(c) **Ensure that victims of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, have adequate access to shelters and support services, in particular in the outer islands where no counselling centres exist, and, to that end, establish well-resourced public shelters and support civil society organizations providing such services;**

(d) **Ensure that perpetrators of domestic violence are prosecuted and that victims of such violence are not subjected to alternative dispute settlement procedures.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

25. The Committee notes with concern that, under the Crimes Act 1969, soliciting and prostitution are criminalized. It is also concerned about the lack of information on the connection between the extent of prostitution and trafficking in women and girls and the increase in sex tourism in the State party. It is further concerned about the lack of efforts to prevent the exploitation of prostitution and the lack of exit programmes for women wishing to leave prostitution.

26. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Amend section 161 of the Crimes Act 1969 in order to decriminalize prostitution;**

(b) **Undertake a study on the connection between prostitution and trafficking in women and girls and the tourism industry in the State party to determine the extent of sex tourism in the State party;**

(c) **Allocate sufficient resources in order to provide adequate support services to victims of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution;**

(d) **Provide alternative income-generating opportunities and exit programmes for women who wish to leave prostitution, as well as adequate protection and rehabilitation services for women and girls who are victims of exploitation of prostitution;**

(e) **Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.**

Participation in political and public life

27. The Committee welcomes the creation of the Cook Islands Women Parliamentarians Caucus, which supports women in politics and encourages women in local communities to increase their participation in political life. Nevertheless, it is concerned about the low representation of women in Parliament, notwithstanding an increase in the number of women candidates in recent elections. The Committee notes with concern that women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions, in particular in local government, the judiciary (court of appeal) and in senior management positions in the civil service.

28. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Introduce measures, including a review of the Electoral Act 2004 and the Island Government Act 2012–2013, to increase the number of women in Parliament and local government;**

(b) **Introduce measures, including temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 and general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life, including quotas and reserved seats, to accelerate the full and equal participation of women in elected and appointed bodies;**

(c) **Provide full support to the work of the Cook Islands Women Parliamentarians Caucus, to promote the participation of women in political life.**

Nationality

29. The Committee notes that, under the State party's legislation, women and men have equal rights to acquire, change, retain or transmit their nationality. It is concerned, however, about the lack of information on whether the draft immigration policy protects the rights of migrant women to resident status on an equal basis with migrant men.

30. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the immigration policy protects the rights of migrant women to resident status on an equal basis with migrant men and that it complies with article 9 of the Convention.**

Education

31. The Committee notes with appreciation the substantive measures taken by the State party to ensure equal access for girls and boys to education, including in the outer islands. It also notes the State party's efforts, under the Education Act 2012, to retain girls in school during and following pregnancy and to reduce their burden of caregiving work. Nevertheless, the Committee notes the following with concern:

(a) The lack of comprehensive data collection aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of the Education Act 2012;

(b) The lack of access for girls with disabilities to specialized programmes under the inclusive education policy of the Ministry of Education;

(c) The lack of a monitoring mechanism to address discriminatory gender stereotypes on the part of teachers of sexual and reproductive health education;

(d) The high rate of early pregnancy;

(e) The concentration of women and girls in traditionally female-dominated fields of study and their underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which affects their career paths.

32. **In line with its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Monitor the implementation of the right of girls and women to education by regularly collecting data, disaggregated by sex, location, age, school type and ethnic group, on access for girls and women to all levels of education, including dropout rates owing to early pregnancy and caregiving work;**

(b) **Improve access for girls with disabilities to specialized programmes under the inclusive education policy of the Ministry of Education by, among other things, allocating adequate human, technical and financial resources to the implementation of the policy;**

(c) **Ensure the inclusion in school curricula of age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights that covers responsible sexual behaviour and is free from discriminatory gender stereotypes;**

(d) **Strengthen efforts to retain girls in school;**

(e) **Address stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls from enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, and provide girls with career counselling, scholarships and other incentives to encourage them to choose courses of study in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.**

Employment

33. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Employment Relations Act 2012, which, among other things, extends maternity benefits to women in de facto relationships and prohibits discrimination against women and sexual harassment in the workplace. It notes the following with concern, however:

(a) The concentration of women in informal employment, part-time employment and unpaid work, which puts them at risk of old-age poverty as a result of low pension benefits or exclusion from the pension system;

(b) The lack of affirmative recruitment policies in the private sector to ensure the equal participation of women in the labour market;

(c) The lack of formal arrangements for working mothers to receive time off from work for the purpose of breastfeeding their infants or expressing milk;

(d) The lack of affordable childcare facilities, which increases the burden on women and girls of raising and caring for children;

(e) That maternity leave is limited to six weeks, which does not comply with relevant International Labour Organization conventions or international standards, and the short period of parental leave for men under the Employment Relations Act 2012;

(f) The lack of access to labour-related complaint and dispute resolution mechanisms to address discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, in employment;

(g) The persistent gender pay gap in the State party and the lack of legislation guaranteeing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;

(h) The lack of legislation to protect women migrant workers in the State party.

34. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Create more opportunities for women to gain access to formal employment, ensure their inclusion in the pension system, count child-rearing**

periods towards pension benefits and accelerate the implementation of plans to promote equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men;

(b) **Encourage the private sector to adopt gender-sensitive employment policies and to increase the participation of women in professions that are traditionally dominated by men;**

(c) **Formalize flexible work arrangements for working mothers, including time off from work for the purpose of breastfeeding their infants or expressing milk;**

(d) **Increase the number of affordable childcare facilities throughout the State party, including public childcare facilities, to ensure the equal participation of women in the labour market;**

(e) **Extend maternity leave from 6 to 12 weeks and take appropriate measures to implement other types of maternity protection in line with relevant International Labour Organization conventions and other international standards on maternity protection, provide for mothers to take maternity leave before and after giving birth at their option and increase periods of paternity leave to promote the participation of men in childcare;**

(f) **Raise awareness among women of available labour-related complaint and dispute resolution mechanisms to address discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment;**

(g) **Adopt and enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in the public and the private sectors, narrow the gender pay gap with a view to eliminating it, including through gender-neutral, analytical job classification and evaluation methods and by conducting regular pay surveys, encourage regular labour inspections aimed at enforcing compliance with the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and regularly review wages;**

(h) **Ensure that women migrant workers enjoy equal protection under the law, including with regard to employment benefits.**

Health

35. The Committee notes the efforts made by the State party to improve access for women to health, such as the implementation of the national health strategy 2012–2016 and the integrated national strategic plan for sexual and reproductive health 2014–2018. Nevertheless, it is concerned about the following:

(a) The limited access for women and girls to sexual and reproductive health services, including breast cancer screening services;

(b) The limited access for women and girls living in the outer islands to health-care services, owing in part to the lack of medical doctors;

(c) The high rates of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, which are attributable to the limited availability of contraceptives in the State party;

(d) The limited grounds for legal abortion, which, under the Crimes Act 1969, is permissible only in cases in which a pregnancy presents a serious danger to the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant woman, and the lack of services, including post-abortion care, for women who undergo abortions;

(e) The high number of women and girls with mental health problems and the lack of appropriate mental health services addressing the specific needs of women and girls.

36. **In line with its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that all women have access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health-care services and increase awareness among women and girls of available services;**

(b) **Ensure that the health sector is adequately funded, improve access for women, in particular those living in the outer islands, to high-quality health care and allocate adequate budgetary resources to recruit medical doctors to provide services in the outer islands;**

(c) **Take measures to address the high incidence of sexually transmitted infections and early pregnancy, including through awareness-raising programmes on prevention and by promoting the use of modern contraceptives. In that regard, the State party should ensure that contraceptives are available, accessible and affordable, including in the outer islands;**

(d) **Revise the Crimes Act 1969 to legalize abortion, at least in cases of rape, incest, threat to the life or health of the pregnant woman and severe fetal impairment, decriminalize abortion in all other cases and ensure access for women to safe, high-quality and affordable abortion-related care, including post-abortion care;**

(e) **Conduct a needs assessment of the mental health situation of women and girls in the State party and, on the basis of its results, develop specialized mental health programmes, including programmes to prevent suicide, and services for women and girls.**

Economic empowerment of women and their participation in social life

37. The Committee notes with appreciation the measures taken by the State party to promote the economic advancement of women, in particular in the outer islands, including the signing of a memorandum of understanding with civil society organizations and the coverage of freight costs for handcrafted goods produced by women in order to facilitate access to markets. The Committee notes with concern, however, that:

(a) Women continue to face barriers to gaining access to financing for their entrepreneurial initiatives;

(b) There is no strategy to ensure the sustainability of civil society programmes aimed at increasing the participation of women in economic activities.

38. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take appropriate measures to ensure that women can gain access to loans and other forms of financial credit and adopt policies to promote the entrepreneurship of women and enhance the entrepreneurial skills of women and girls;**

(b) **Adopt long-term policies and programmes on the economic empowerment of women and regularly monitor their implementation and effectiveness.**

Rural women

39. The Committee notes with concern that women living in the outer islands have limited access to public services, including health services, safe and affordable transportation and adequate drinking water.

40. **In line with its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure the adequate provision of medical services, including through mobile health-care units, in the outer islands;**

(b) **Provide women and girls living in the outer islands with safe and affordable means of transport, including personal travel subsidies to complement existing subsidies for the transport of goods;**

(c) **Ensure that women and girls living in the outer islands have access to adequate drinking water.**

Disadvantaged groups of women

41. The Committee commends the State party on its adoption of a strategic plan for women and girls with disabilities for the period 2018–2022 in order to promote the advancement of women and girls with disabilities. It notes with concern, however, the lack of information on access to education, employment and health care for women with disabilities.

42. **The Committee recommends that the State party provide information in its next periodic report on access to education, employment and health care for women and girls with disabilities.**

43. The Committee notes with concern the intersecting forms of discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

44. **The Committee recommends that the State party make the legislative changes necessary to prohibit intersecting forms of discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and conduct awareness-raising activities to address their stigmatization in society.**

Impact of climate change and natural disasters on women

45. The Committee notes the State party's efforts, such as its joint national action plan for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation 2016–2020, the drafting process for which included the involvement of women, to address the adverse impact of climate change and disasters. Nevertheless, it notes with concern the disproportionate impact of climate change, drought, rising sea levels and other weather-related disasters on women and girls in the State party. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of a gender perspective in policies and programmes on climate change, disaster response and disaster risk reduction.

46. **In line with its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into national policies and programmes on climate change, disaster response and disaster risk reduction to ensure that the needs and concerns of women are fully reflected, and that it assess the impact of such policies and programmes on women's rights and their overall well-being.**

Marriage and family relations

47. The Committee is concerned with regard to the following:

(a) That the minimum age of marriage for girls is still 16 years;

(b) The lack of legislative measures to ensure the equitable division of joint marital property upon dissolution of de facto relationships;

(c) The lack of adequate funding and measures to enforce the Family Protection and Support Act of 2017.

48. **In the context of the ongoing review of legislation of the State party to ensure that it is in compliance with the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that the review of the Marriage Act 1973, and the enactment of legislation raising the minimum age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18 years, is completed on schedule, by the end of 2018;**

(b) **Review the Matrimonial Property Act 1991–92 in order to adequately protect the property rights of women and establish a system of equitable division of marital property upon dissolution of de facto relationships, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution;**

(c) **Allocate an adequate budget for the implementation of the Family Protection and Support Act of 2017, raise awareness of it among women and regularly monitor its implementation.**

Data collection

49. The Committee is concerned about the general lack of statistical data, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability, geographical location and socioeconomic background, which are necessary for accurately assessing the situation of women, determining the magnitude and nature of discrimination, developing informed and targeted policies and systematically monitoring and evaluating progress achieved towards the realization of substantive equality between women and men in all areas covered by the Convention.

50. **The Committee calls upon the State party to develop capacity-building and establish a funding programme on gender-related issues in order to improve its collection of data through the national strategy for the development of statistics. The collection of data disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors is necessary for assessing the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes aimed at mainstreaming gender equality and enhancing the enjoyment by women of their human rights. In that regard, the Committee draws attention to its general recommendation No. 9 (1989) on statistical data concerning the situation of women, and encourages the State party to seek technical assistance from the relevant United Nations agencies and enhance its collaboration with women's associations, which could assist in the collection of accurate data.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

51. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

Dissemination

52. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.**

Technical assistance

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in this respect.**

Ratification of other treaties

54. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments [1] would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in its own right.**

Follow-up to the concluding observations

55. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 18 (b), 24 (a), 26 (a) and 48 (a) above.**

Preparation of the next report

56. **The Committee requests the State party to submit its fourth periodic report, which is due in July 2022. The report should be submitted on time and cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

57. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**

[1] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.